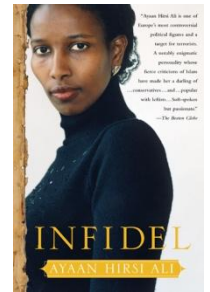


Reading Group Discussion Questions—*Infidel*



Hirsi Ali tells us that this book is "the story of what I have experienced, what I have seen, and why I think the way I do" (page xii). Which experiences does she highlight as being integral to forming her current views on Islam?

"No eyes silently accused me of being a whore. No lecherous men called me to bed with them. No Brotherhood members threatened me with hellfire. I felt safe; I could follow my curiosity" (page 185). This passage refers to Hirsi Ali's initial impression of walking the streets in Germany. What other significant differences between the West and Islamic Africa did she observe during her first days in Europe? Upon arriving in Holland, what were her initial impressions of the Dutch people and the Dutch government? Did these change significantly as she lived there?

How did Hirsi Ali's immigration experience and integration into Dutch society differ from those of other Somalians?

Discuss the differences that Hirsi Ali noticed between raising children in Muslim countries and raising children in the West. In particular, what did she notice about Johanna's parenting? How were Muslim parents different from Dutch parents in their instructions to their children on the playground? (see page 245).

In Hirsi Ali's words, "a Muslim girl does not make her own decisions or seek control. She is trained to be docile. If you are a Muslim girl, you disappear, until there is almost no you inside you" (page 94). How do the three generations of women in Hirsi Ali's family differ in their willingness to "submit" to this doctrine?

As seen through Hirsi Ali's eyes, what factors contributed to Haweya's death? How might members of her family describe events differently?

Although Hirsi Ali mostly refrains from criticizing her father, she publishes the personal letter he wrote her upon her divorce. Why do you think she included this letter? Were you surprised by any other intimate details of her life that she revealed in the book?

The events of September 11th caused Hirsi Ali to reread sections of the Quran and to evaluate the role of violence in Islam. Consequently, her interpretation of September 11th differs from those around her. What does she conclude? Do you agree with her analysis?

On page 295, Hirsi Ali lists the three goals she wished to accomplish by joining Parliament. By the book's end has she accomplished all three? How did her views of the Dutch government change over time?

Examine Hirsi Ali's relationship with her brother. How did Mahad's and Abbeh's reactions to her political work differ?

Throughout her political career, Hirsi Ali has made several bold statements challenging the Muslim world. In your opinion, were these declarations worth the risk?

Has this book changed the way you view Islam? According to Hirsi Ali, is Islam compatible with Western values and culture? Do you agree with her?

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

- Birth—November 13, 1969
- Where—Mogadishu, Somalia
- Awards—Bellwether of the Year Award (Norway; Freedom Prize (Denmark), Democracy Prize and Moral Courage Award(Sweden)
- Education—B.A., M.A., Leiden University, Netherlands
- Currently—lives in the Washington, D.C. area



Ayaan Hirsi Ali was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, was raised Muslim, and spent her childhood and young adulthood in Africa and Saudi Arabia. In 1992, Hirsi Ali came to the Netherlands as a refugee. She earned her college degree in political science and worked for the Dutch Labor party. She denounced Islam after the September 11 terrorist attacks and now serves as a Dutch parliamentarian, fighting for the rights of Muslim women in Europe, the enlightenment of Islam, and security in the West. (*From the publisher.*)

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Dutch feminist, writer, and politician. She is the estranged daughter of the Somali scholar, politician, and revolutionary opposition leader Hirsi Magan Isse. She is a prominent critic of Islam, and her screenplay for Theo Van Gogh's movie *Submission* led to death threats. Since van Gogh's assassination by a Muslim extremist in 2004, she has lived in seclusion under the protection of Dutch authorities.

When she was eight, her family left Somalia for Saudi Arabia, then Ethiopia, and eventually settled in Kenya. She sought and obtained political asylum in the Netherlands in 1992, under circumstances that later became the center of a political controversy. In 2003 she was elected a member of the House of Representatives (the lower house of the Dutch parliament), representing the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). A political crisis surrounding the potential stripping of her Dutch citizenship led to her resignation from the parliament, and led indirectly to the fall of the second Balkenende cabinet.

In 2005, she was named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. She has also received several awards for her work, including Norway's Human Rights Service's Bellwether of the Year Award, the Danish Freedom Prize, the Swedish Democracy Prize, and the Moral Courage Award for commitment to conflict resolution, ethics, and world citizenship. She is currently a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, working in the United States. (*From Wikipedia.*)